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U.S. OWES INDIA $216 BN AS ITS DEBT SOARS TO $28 TRILLION

Republicans opposing Biden's $1.9 tn Covid relief package warned it would worsen the country's debt-to-GDP ratio

BORROWING FROM NOT FRIENDLY COUNTRIES

On a day the House of Representatives approved the package in a 219-212 near party-line vote, Republican Senator Alex Mooney said US will have to borrow more to fund the stimulus from countries that aren't friends. The biggest creditors are Japan and China, whom the US owes $1 trillion each. The $29 trillion debt means the US has borrowed $84,000 per citizen | P12

DEBT DOUBLED DURING OBAMA YEARS

- Mooney said the national debt doubled during Barack Obama's tenure and added $10,000 per citizen in the past one year alone
- The relief package aims to tackle the economic fallout from the pandemic, including direct financial aid to average Americans, support to businesses and boost the national vaccination drive

$104 tn
ESTIMATED ADDITION TO THE NATIONAL DEBT BY 2050

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Vaccine at private hospitals to cost ₹250

Initially, 20K facilities will get Covishield alone; list of 20 comorbidities finalised

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA
@ New Delhi

THE Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday fixed the cost of Covid-19 vaccines, set to be offered to those above 60 years and people over 45 years with specified comorbidities, at ₹250 per shot in private hospitals and also finalised a list of 20 underlying conditions, or comorbidities.

Top sources in the ministry also said that in the beginning, only Covishield, developed by Oxford University-AstraZeneca, will be made available in about 20,000 private hospitals where the expanded Covid-19 vaccination drive is set to begin.

> **There are two reasons why only Covishield would be available in private hospitals in the beginning. First, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin has supply issues. Secondly, people have greater faith in Covishield**
>
> Officials

The list of comorbidities includes those having diabetes for over 10 years or with complications and hypertension. Also, people diagnosed with solid cancer since July last year, lymphoma, blood cancer or myeloma, those with HIV and acid attack survivors with involvement of the respiratory system will be eligible.

As per the agreement between the manufacturers, representatives of private hospitals and the government, the vaccine makers will get ₹150 per jab while hospitals will earn ₹100 per shot for every dose of the vaccine administered. "States have been explained that the private hospitals functioning as Covid vaccination centres can be subject to a ceiling of ₹250 per person per dose along with the electronic and financial management mechanism in this regard," the ministry said in a statement.

Around 10,000 private hospitals empanelled under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, nearly 687 hospitals empanelled under the Central Government Health Scheme and other private hospitals empanelled under state health insurance schemes can participate in the vaccination drive, it added.

The price of the vaccines was fixed after several rounds of meetings between government officials, led by V K Paul, member (health) Niti Aayog, who heads the National Expert Group on Covid-19 Vaccine Administration, and representatives of the two vaccine manufacturers, Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India.

The price for each dose of the vaccine for individuals will be less than the price at which the government had procured the vaccines in the first and second phases of the vaccination drive for healthcare and frontline workers.

The Centre had paid ₹200 per dose for Covishield by Serum Institute of India and ₹295 per dose for Covaxin by Bharat Biotech, excluding taxes, when it had procured 110 million and 55 million doses of the two vaccines, respectively last month.

STOCK STATUS

State	Vaccine availability
Karnataka	Covishield
Kerala	Covishield
Tamil Nadu	Covishield, Covaxin
Telangana	Covishield, Covaxin
Andhra Pradesh	Covishield, Covaxin
Odisha	Covishield, Covaxin

Comorbidities for determining eligibility

- Heart failure with hospital admission in past one year
- Significant left ventricular systolic dysfunction
- Moderate or severe valvular heart disease
- **Post cardiac** transplant/ left ventricular assist device
- **Coronary artery disease** with past CABG/PTCA/MI and hypertension/ **diabetes** on treatment
- **CT/MRI** documented stroke and **hypertension**/diabetes on treatment
- Angina and hypertension/ diabetes on treatment
- **Diabetes** (>10 years or with complications) and hypertension on treatment
- **Post cardiac** transplant/ left ventricular assist device
- End-stage **kidney disease** on haemodialysis/CAPD

- Current prolonged use of oral corticosteroids/immunosuppressants
- Decompensated cirrhosis
- Severe respiratory disease with hospitalisation in last two years
- Lymphoma/leukaemia/ myeloma
- Diagnosis of any solid cancer on or after July 1, 2020 or currently on cancer therapy
- Sickle cell disease/bone marrow failure/aplastic anemia/thalassemia major
- Primary immunodeficiency diseases/HIV infection
- Disabilities due to intellectual disabilities/muscular dystrophy/acid attack with involvement of respiratory system/ persons with disabilities having high support needs/multiple disabilities

Delhi judge who gave Disha bail gets threats

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

SOON after activist Disha Ravi was granted bail in the toolkit case, a section of social media users targeted additional sessions **judge Dharmendra Rana** for making observations critical of the government. Rana's is not an isolated case of a judge facing online abuse and threat after delivering a verdict. This was highlighted by Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad in Patna on Saturday when he said a 'disturbing trend' of activists criticising judges for unfavourable verdicts had started.

While stating that criticism of judgments in good faith is healthy for democracy, legal experts suggested punitive action against those transgressing the 'criticise the judgment, not the judge' dictum.

Senior Supreme Court advocate Sanjay Hegde said: "Most of the ill-informed criticism of Judge Rana is due to a sentence, saying sedition cannot be used to minister the wounded vanity of governments. That sentence is a quote from a British judge, ruling in favour of an Indian citizen against the colonial government of pre-independence India. Most ill-informed criticism can and must be shrugged off, but if there is anything particularly vicious, the High Court must take preventive or punitive steps at an appropriate time." P10

States in a fix as Centre scrambles to finalise last-minute jab details

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

WHILE the Covid-19 vaccination drive is entering the next phase on Monday to cover everyone above 60 years and those above 45 years with co-morbidities, states are still grappling with basic details.

According to sources, many states are in the dark about how many doses, or which vaccine, will they receive.

Officials in the Union health ministry said talks are on with Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to gauge the available stock of vaccine vials that can be immediately dispatched to states.

An estimated 12 crore people come under this vulnerable group, of which 11 crore are people older than 60 years.

Sources added that while the government has fixed a price of ₹150 per dose for vaccine makers in private hospitals, manufacturers are not happy.

"The issue during the price negotiation was that how can the price of the vaccine in private hospitals be lower than the rate at which the Central government had procured it earlier for the first phase of vaccination," said an official. "The companies were very reluctant to accept the price," the source added.

Officials in a few states, meanwhile, said they need additional doses at least a day before the next phase starts but there is no clarity on when and how much will arrive.

"We do not want a situation where entitled beneficiaries queue up for vaccines at a health facility and we have to tell them that enough vaccines are not available," said a health department official from West Bengal.

Tiger count in October with focus on zero error

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THE keenly awaited tiger census will be conducted from October, most probably after the monsoon season, and the data will be directly uploaded online to ensure minimal or zero error. That is not all. Karnataka will also take the lead among the southern states in data collection, assessment and assistance, as it houses the second largest tiger population in India.

As per the 2018 census report, of the 2,967 tigers in India, Karnataka was home to 524 tigers, slipping to second position, while Madhya Pradesh had 526. Karnataka had then added 112 tigers compared to the previous count.

For the upcoming census, training for the staffers and trainers will start from March, after which others will be trained. Like the previous exercise, the census will be conducted in tiger reserves and also other areas where tiger presence is reported. Volunteers will be roped in, just like previous occasions. P7

EXPRESS READ

Counter-terrorism ops in J&K to continue: Army

Udhampur /Kupwara: Two top Army commanders on Saturday said the ceasefire between India and Pakistan will have no bearing on counter-terrorism operations and the force will exercise "maximum restraint" if there is any violation.

US House approves $1.9-trillion Covid bill

Washington: The House of Representatives approved a $1.9-trillion pandemic relief bill that was championed by President Joe Biden, the first step in providing another dose of aid to the nation as the measure now moves to a tense Senate. P11

Now, buy Channapatna toys, Bidri ware online

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

FROM the famed Channapatna toys of Ramanagara district to the popular Bidri ware from Bidar, over 100 handicraft items will now be available under the Cauvery brand name on e-commerce platforms. The Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation (KSHDC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Flipkart and is planning to have a tie-up with Amazon too.

Carved wooden frames, wall hangings, sandalwood pieces, Bidri works, wooden toys from Channapatna, brass and bronze showpieces including small idols, cotton rugs, rosewood and sandalwood products will be available under the Cauvery Handicrafts brand on Flipkart.

Speaking to *The New Sunday Express*, IGP and Managing Director of KSHDC, D Roopa, said the MoU was signed a few days ago. "Initially, we added 50 items. But after seeing the sales, we added another 50 items recently." P6

Why not use Azad's services to unite Cong, ask dissenters

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

IN a show of strength, Congress dissenters, termed G23, said the party had weakened in the past decade and vowed to work for strengthening it.

"We have assembled here and had also gathered earlier and we will unitedly strengthen the party," senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal said while addressing the Shanti Sammelan in Jammu on Saturday.

Besides Sibal, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar, Manish Tewari and Vivek Tankha addressed the sammelan, the first coming together of the dissident Congress leaders at a single platform. Not happy with the party for not accommodating Azad in some capacity Sibal said, "When we felt they were freeing Azad from Parliament, we felt very bad. We felt he should not been freed from Parliament. He is a very senior party leader and I don't I don't understand why Congress is not utilizing the services of the experienced Azad."

Azad, who arrived in Jammu on Friday after retiring from the Rajya Sabha, said with Gandhi's ideology, they would fight the new struggle. "We will carry forward his ideology and self service of Gandhi will remain with us."

HEAT IS ON

The cops who sold a seized Jaguar

DIVYA CUTINHO @ Mangaluru

TWO keepers of the law seem to have given skulduggery a new dimension. Drawn by the prospect of making some big bucks, they quietly sold off a luxury car which was seized in connection with a fraud case. But wait! The long arm of the law did catch up with them too.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime and Traffic) Vinay A Gaonkar told *TNSE* that the two officers — Police Inspector K K Ramakrishna, and Police Sub-Inspector Kabbal Raj — were posted with the crime branch in Mangaluru when they arrested three Kerala-based businessmen for allegedly cheating several people in Dakshina Kannada in a ponzi scheme. Three high-end cars — a BMW, a Porsche and a Jaguar — were also seized from them. But, the officers had shown the seizure of only the BMW and the Porshe on record, and not the Jaguar. The cost of the missing car is said to be around Rs 50 lakh. The incident came to light when the accused businessmen came out on bail and wanted to get the cars released. P5

> **Preliminary investigation revealed that the two officers were at fault after which the commissioner recommended a CID inquiry**
>
> Officer

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